



# Sen. Dale Brandland's

## UPDATE FROM OLYMPIA

3/5/03

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**Committee Assignments**  
Agriculture (Vice Chair)  
Health & Long Term Care  
Judiciary

Dear Friends,

I have received ample feedback from many of you who receive this update. I want to thank you for your encouragement and kind words.

I want to quickly tell you about a couple of bills that passed the Senate Health and Long Term Care Committee today.

Washington's Basic Health Plan (BHP) is for workers without employer-provided health care coverage. Because of rising health care costs and the state's \$2 billion revenue shortfall, the current structure of the BHP is not sustainable. Our choices are to change the benefits or reduce the number of people enrolled.

**Senate Bill 5807** makes changes to the BHP program so that those most in need will not lose coverage and will have access to preventative health care without additional costs. Coverage mandates will be trimmed to cut costs, and eligibility will change from an annual income of \$36,800 to \$27,600 for a family of four.

**Senate Bill 5209** makes changes in our state's medical malpractice laws. Currently, many doctors, hospitals and other medical specialists are finding it impossible to find medical malpractice insurance. Huge monetary awards granted by sympathetic, but often unrealistic, juries have caused insurance rates to skyrocket. The effects are numerous: healthcare prices continue to escalate as costs are passed down to consumers; doctors are leaving the "specialist" fields like OBGYN and neurosurgeons because they can't afford the \$40,000 - \$60,000 coverage costs; and many rural residents are finding it increasingly difficult to find quality health care.

Provisions in Senate Bill 5209 will slow down escalating insurance costs and help ensure quality health care is available for all.

I will continue to update you on these proposals and others as they make their way through the legislative process.

Dale E. Brandland 42<sup>nd</sup> Legislative District

**Senate Bills to Watch**

**SB 5728** – the Liability Reform Act of 2003. Several amendments were heard in the Senate Judiciary Committee last week. Some were adopted and some failed. *(The bill passed the Judiciary Committee last Thursday and is now in the Rules Committee.)*

**SB 5807** – Changes provisions to the state's BHP *(This bill passed the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee and is now in Ways and Means.)*

**SB 5904** – Creates prescription drug program for Seniors *(passed Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee and is now in Ways & Means)*

**Counties seek shield from lawsuits related to acts of ex-inmates**

Brandland said liability for former inmates was a constant worry while he was sheriff, especially because the jail had grown so crowded that the space was reserved almost exclusively for felons.

"The reality is almost all jails in the state are overcrowded, and they're really scrambling to find ways to deal with these people," he said.

Brandland said jails can't be expected to anticipate everything. If a jail releases a shoplifter, for example, and the shoplifter kills someone, the jail should not be found at fault.

"How in the world can you expect the counties to anticipate that that guy is going to commit a crime?" he said. "It's not like they're letting out murderers." – *Seattle Times*, 3/4/03

**NOTE:**

Please feel free to share this update with your friends and neighbors. If you would like to be on the e-mail distribution list, contact this office with your name and address.